

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 17, 2008

The Honorable Robert C. Byrd
Chairman
United States Senate
Committee on Appropriations
135 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
United States Senate
Committee on Appropriations
123 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Byrd and Ranking Member Cochran:

The recent and extraordinary tornadoes, storms, and flooding of the Mississippi River and its tributaries have left many communities devastated in our states. While our first-responders, state, and local governments are continuing their heroic effort to provide assistance to our citizens in these areas, our communities are still suffering from the huge losses to homes, businesses, and infrastructure caused by these storms.


All of our states face the arduous task of rebuilding. As our state and local governments have begun to calculate their various losses and needs, it is clear that the magnitude of this disaster will require action from the federal government beyond the Stafford Act. Every time a region of our country has been affected by a major disaster we have come together to make sure states do not face disasters alone.


These tornadoes, storms, and flooding have affected nine states across the central United States. While each state has unique types of damage, we have joined together in an attempt to ensure that the entire region is able to receive the assistance needed to come out of these disasters stronger. We need to make sure that FEMA, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, HUD, Commerce, USDA, DOL, DHHS, DOT, and other federal agencies have the necessary resources to save businesses, homes and lives.


A robust disaster relief package is necessary to fund the costs that these agencies will incur in the recovery process. Our states have provided the Committee with very initial estimates of funds that will be needed, beyond what FEMA and the Stafford Act will cover, to begin this process. The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program is especially important in this regard. We believe this program should provide grants for home repair or replacement, small businesses, and community infrastructure.


We urge you to continue to work with us as you consider an additional Supplemental Appropriations measure to ensure critical funding and relief reaches the areas devastated by this disaster. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

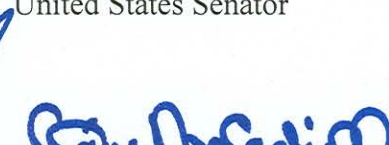
Sincerely,

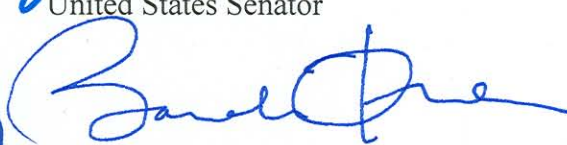

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